

Advice to youth that tells the truth

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Few people have heard of someone who enjoys being told what to do. Even less have heard of children who look forward to the poorly euphemized commands.

However, if anyone ever said they knew a teenage girl who likes authoritative advice, they were flat out lying. Mark Twain was challenged to write a speech to a class of young girls with instructive advice that would be suitable towards youth. His seemingly impossible task was to get a class of girls, strangers to him, to follow his advice – advice he had longed to instruct youth on but hadn't until then had the chance to do so. The speech Twain ends up writing, titled “ Advice to Youth,” does the impossible in giving the group of young girls advice that they would want to listen to. In order to get his messages across, Twain effectively uses satire to strengthen his arguments. The use of satire in his speech helps contradict stereotypical advice and ultimately leaves the class with helpful guidance.

Both are accomplished in a satiric, audience-grasping manor. On the surface, the advice Twain gives to the group of girls is untraditional. It is the type of advice that children were not used to hearing and adults were not used to telling. For example, when Twain brings up the issue of lying, he does not tell the girls to never lie – something they would have heard many times before. He instead however warns that, “ You want to be very careful about lying; otherwise you are nearly sure to get caught,” (Twain, 1). Twain advises the girls to be careful when lying as to not get caught, and does not “ chalk up” lying as a cardinal sin.

By delivering the unorthodox advice Twain is able to grab the girls attention while still entrusting them with the advice he wished for them to receive. Twain's speech ultimately left the girls with advice they could use in everyday life. With the help of a satiric "beating-around-the-bush" method, the advice for each topic was likely received. For example, Twain recommends for the girls to obey their parents. However he adds, "you can generally make more by humoring that superstition than you can by acting on your own better judgment," (Twain, 1) to explain that he understands that their parents are not always right. Although he is in essence telling the youth that they are usually more knowledgeable than their parents, the advice received does not correspond to this stubborn viewpoint.

The girls in the class likely left understanding that they should obey their parents – even if they knew they were wrong. Twain's satiric approach may have digressed from a traditional method of counseling. He purposely chooses to look at the advice from the same way his audience would and use that to deliver guidance that would stick. By changing the way the group of girls normally were given advice he interested them and therefor got through to them. Although untraditional and satirical, the advice was likely heard because it was delivered in a way that children would want to listen to.

His sarcastic and humorous word and phrase choices engaged his audience and strengthened his overall speech. My essay on Mark Twain's speech at the beginning of the year and now changed drastically. In my first attempt I admitted put little effort into my writing. I also did not take the time to plan out what I was going to say. However after taking more time and a more

serious approach at the task I believe this final draft is much more suitable for public view. In the final draft I used the rubric to try and guide my writing.

For example I began my essay with a creative use of paragraphing – a tool displayed in the “ five category” for conventions on the rubric. I also reread my piece in order to catch any spelling or grammatical errors. Finally, by planning out my writing I am confident my ideas are more focused and “ put together.” Although embarrassed by my first attempt at this piece, I appreciate the second chance to improve my essay and am confident that I made drastic improvements.